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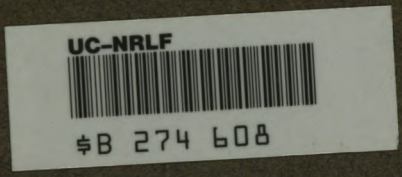

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WHY ?

By H. L. DODGE

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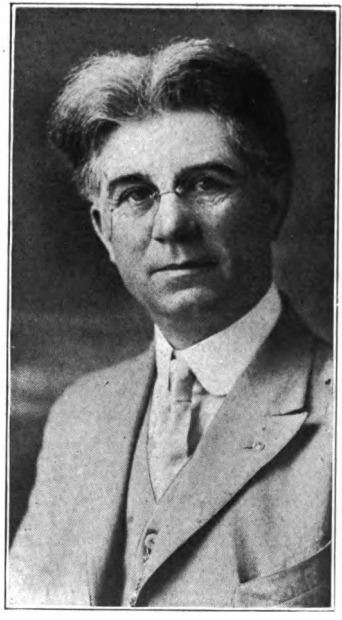

H. L. DODGE

ALL AMERICAN

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WHY?

By H. L. DODGE

Long Beach, California

Author of "The Blonde Eskimo," "The Ferret," "Kaiser Nicotine," "We Do Not Speak English," "If She Were Your Sister," "Restoring of the Mind."

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WE HAVE
AN AMERICAN FLAG
AN AMERICAN PEOPLE
WHY NOT
AN AMERICAN LANGUAGE?

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The object of this article is to try to convince you that Americans do not speak English. If we own our own flag why not lay claim to our own language? Where is there another country that flies its own flag that does not also claim its own language, although in their vocabulary there may be many words borrowed from other tongues?

America stands alone as the only recognized republic maintaining an independent government, that does not assert its right to claim the name of the speech in which its citizens express their daily thoughts .

Take for instance, the Swiss nation. It has been claimed they have no language of their own, but by careful research we find that they speak a mixture of German, French and

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Italian, thereby forming a combination that they have seen fit to call the Swiss language. Why cannot our combination of words be called the American language?

The American language is typical of America, and while we acknowledge the foundation of our speech as derived from the ancient Anglo-Saxon, yet the changes in pronounciation and meaning have become so decidedly American that even an Englishman direct from London can scarcely understand a general conversation, as held by educated American people. Only about twenty-five per cent of words used in America owe their origin to the so-called English tongue.

Twenty-five of the languages to which American is mainly traceable

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are: Arabic, Hebrew, Sanscrit, Persian, Latin, Greek, Slavic, French, Provencal, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Old Saxon, Danish, Dutch, Low Deutch, High Deutch, or German, Icelandic, Malay, Chinese, or Cathay, Japanese, Egytian, Hindustan, Turkish and Indian. An occasional Latin word dates back to the Roman Conquest. After the Angles and Saxons conquered the island, they were soon Christianized, and their Teutonic tongue received additions from ecclesiastical Latin and Greek. "No other tongue ancient or modern, has appeared in so many and such different phases; and no other people of high civilization has so completely disregarded the barriers of race and circumstance, and adopted into its speech

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so great a number of unnative words."

In the United States and Canada the American language has added greatly to its vocabulary, not only words from native Indian dialects, but words from the French who settled in the northern and the Spanish who settled in the southern parts of North America. And so, in the Far East, traders came in touch, not merely with Chinese and Japanese words, but with Portuguese and Dutch words used by the early traders in that part of the world. Thus originates the American language.

Quoting from a public school teacher, who voices the sentiment of other opinionated instructors in the science of speech, "There is no American language, except that gibberish in

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which our native American Indians express themselves." If this statement is true and we Americans are not entitled to our own language, why then does not the same theory apply to the American people and the American flag?

Following are a few examples of "borrowed" words from other languages:

SPANISH—Breeze, embargo, contraband, comrade, stampede, llama, broncho.

DUTCH—Yacht, skipper, sloop, furlough, drill, leagues.

ITALIAN—But, canto, folio, cartoon, concert, regatta, cicerone.

NORTH AMERICA (through Spain) Sassafras, moccasin, papoose, persim-

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mon, opossum, tomahawk, hickory, terrapin, totem.

MEXICAN (through Spain)—Chocolate, cocoa, tomato, ranchero.

ARAB—Harem, hashish, assassin, magazine.

GREEK—Church, bishop, priest, evangelist, dialogue, astronomy, photography, telephone.

AFRICAN—Banana.

SOUTH SEAS—Tattoo, kangaroo, taboo.

MALAY—Bamboo, cockatoo.

CARRIBEAN AND HAYTI (through Spain)—Cannibal, canoe, hurricane, hammock, maize, tobacco, potato.

FRANCE—Soiree, seance, depot, debris, program, casserole, prestige.

JAPAN—Kimono, jinrikisha, kago, banzai, samurai, hari-kiri.

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PERSIAN—Cheese, carboy.

HINDUSTANI—Bungalow.

With Esperanto used as it was intended, it would be possible to hold a conversation with any of these, so it would be better to call our language Esperanto rather than English.

A fascinating study it is to trace the origin nad development of American words of every-day use.

For example—the word "lady" originally came from the Greek and referred to a woman who was a kneader of dough, or a bread maker, but in our language it means a well behaved woman. She need not be born of rich or noble parents. A good woman is recognized in America as a real lady. In the English language

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a lady is referred to as a woman, good or bad, bearing a title.

Though we have adopted thousands of words from other languages for things which we use in our everyday life, yet the English language is given credit for it. Why?

The following words owe their origin to the English or Saxon; such, for example as earth, fire and water; spring, summer and winter; day and night; morning and evening; twilight and noon; sunrise and sunset; heat, cold, frost, snow, hail, sleet and thunder; or when we speak of sea and land, hill and dale, wood and stream. In the family relations we use such Anglo-Saxon words as roof, fireside, and hearth; among the emotions, fear,

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love, shame, hope and sorrow, as well as smile, tear, laugh, blush and weep.

Then there are a great many short words which are borrowed from the old original Scandinavian, for the Scandinavian invasion left its mark on the language also, in the way of many expressions for things and actions of every-day importance. Just as it is impossible to speak or write in American about higher intellectual or emotional subjects or about fashionable mundane matters without drawing largely upon the French and Latin elements, in the same manner Scandinavian words will crop out in the Anglo-Saxon, which renders it useless to us unless we can speak Scandinavian. An American cannot thrive or be ill or die without Scandinavian words;

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they are to the American language what bread and eggs are to the daily fare. A few other Scandinavian words are sky, skull, wing, gate, scant, loose, call, scream, scrub, drown. So cannot we say we speak Scandinavian —why English?

Then again, do you know that American has rapidly developed into the world-language? But the use of American is spreading in another even more significant way. American visitors in Germany have often remarked the extent to which American is now spoken—and spoken well—by Germans. The German official classes, as well as the commercial classes, speak American; and in secondary schools of that country American is now a required study. The

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German porter in Berlin who handles your small baggage will speak to you in your language, not in his; and the traveling American practising his meagre stock of French on the Parisians, is likely to find that in carrying on a conversation they have more confidence in their own American, than in his French.

You can travel today in any country without knowing a word of any language other than American. If you go to a theatre in Rome you don't need to speak Italian when buying a seat—your American will answer the purpose. It is the same way in Switzerland, in Norway and Sweden, in Greece, or in Petrograd and Moscow; at the hotels, railway stations, in the shops in each of these countries,

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American is one of the languages of ordinary communication; the language of educated and progressive people.

We have recently celebrated the 300th anniversary of the death of Shakespeare, the greatest poetic genius and the most widely known writer who ever lived.

An appropriate time, surely, to think upon the wondrous change which has come about in literature and language since Shakespeare started the work that the Americans finished, in teaching and speaking a language comprehensible to all, which sooner or later will become the universal language of the earth. America is entitled to the credit of this language and must by all means claim it.

In all history, there is no more ro-

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mantic chapter, than the story of how America has risen from the lowliest to the foremost place; how an American-speaking civilization has spread all over the earth; and finally, how the American language itself has grown and established itself in all the seven seas, and become an imperishable world language.

This is, indeed, a very good time to reflect upon the noble heritage that has come to all Americans—not merely in Shakespeare's plays and in the rich treasure of literature to which he contributed so much, but in the subtle and infinitely varied style in which Shakespeare wrote and which is such a vital force in our daily lives —American language itself.

Did you ever stop to think that

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Shakespeare's commanding place in the world's literature was due in a large part to the language which he borrowed from other tongues? That although he was an Englishman by birth he realized the insufficiency of his native language to express his thought, and for that reason seventy-five per cent of his vocabulary was of foreign extraction — that Shakespeare's plays are so enchanting because of the rich and resourceful tongue in which they are written?

It was more than a coincidence that such a man should have been born just at that time—a man sprung from the people (his father was a butcher), with almost no education, knowing only "small Latin and less Greek," as his friend Ben Johnson said, and yet

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he was possessed of the most glowing poetic imagination which has ever been the gift of any man of any age or race.

Is it not curious that in Shakespeare's time, and for long thereafter, the English tongue was still despised by the learned, the pedants and people of the court as well; that Bacon's grandiose and empty "Novum Organon" appearing four years after Shakespeare's death, was written in Latin; and that the same was true sixty years later still, of Newton's immortal "Principia"—and that as late as 1733, Latin was still used for recording court proceedings and for writing charters and bonds in England?

Do you know that while this genius

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Shakespeare was conceiving his majestic works, another treasure was appearing which was a combination of borrowed words from all tongues, and together with Shakespeare's plays, was destined more generally to shape and fix this new language, than practically all the rest of the books which have appeared since?

This other book was the Holy Bible—the "King James" Bible, completed six years before Shakespeare died, in which the borrowed tongue of Shakespeare was adopted.

If you read the earlier versions of this same Bible, or the poets and writers of the century preceeding—even Spencer and the "Faerie Queen"—how unfamiliar and archaic much of the language seems. The Bible of

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that time was largely built up out of Anglo-Saxon, and the wording could hardly be recognized as the Bible of today.

In proof, consider the following portion of a page in strict English, from the gospel of St. Mark, as it appeared in earlier English, before the inhabitants of Great Britain had learned to speak the language we now use:

"THAET GOSPEL
AEFTER MARCUS GERECEDNYSSE

1. Her ye Godspellye angyn Haelendes Cristes, Godes Suna; ewa awriten ys on thaes witegan bec Isaian, Nu ic asende minne engel beforan thine aneyne, se gegearwath thinne weg beforan the. Cly piende stefn on tham westene, Gegearwiath Dryht-

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nes weg, doth rihte his sithas. Johannes waes on westene, fulligende, and bodiende daed-bote fulwiht, on synna forgyfenesee. And to hym ferde eall Iudeics rice, and ealle Hierosolima-ware, and waeron fram hym gefullode on Iordanes flode, hyra synna anddettende. And Ichannes waes gescryd mid oluendes haerum, and fellen gyrdel waes ymbe hys lendenu, and gaerstapan and wuduhunig he aet; and he bododе, and cwaeth; Strengra cymth aefter me, thaes ne eom in wrythe thaet ic hys sceona thwanga bugende uncnytte. Ic fullige eow on waetere; he eow fullath on Halgum Gaste. And on than dagum com se Haslend fram Nazareth Galilee, and waes gefullod on Iordane fram Iohanne. And sona

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of tham waetere, he geseah opene heofenas, and Haligne Gast swa culfran astigende, and on hym wunigende; and tha waes stefn of heofenum geworden;"

Then why say we speak English?

Even the language of Chaucer, the father of English poetry, must be translated into the American language before it becomes intelligible to the students in our educational institutions. Following is an extract from Chaucer's "Prologues to the Canterbury Tales":

"Here Beginneth the Book of the Tales of Canterbury:

WHAN that Aprille with his shoures sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,

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Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale fowles maken meloyde,
That slepen al the night with open ye,
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages):
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
(And palmers for to seken straunge Strondes)
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende

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Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke."

Below is a free translation into American of this prologue:

Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims

Retold by Katherine Lee Bates

The Tabard Inn and The Pilgrims

When the sweet showers from skies of April blue
The drought of March have pierced through and through
And bathed each vein in sap whose silent power
Quickens the bud and nourishes the flower.
When the soft west wind with his

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fragrant breath
Awakened hath in every wood and heath
The tender shoots and when the blithe young sun
His summer course through heaven hath well begun,
And little birds scarce wait till night is gone
To hail with melody the springing dawn,—
For so the joy of nature pricks the heart,—
Then people long from houses to depart
And go a-journeying for love of God
To far-off shrines whose fame is noised abroad,
And specially from every county's end
Of England men to Canterbury wend

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The holy blissful Martyr to adore
Whose help has healed them of the
ills they bore.

It was a curiously long time before the plays of Shakespeare became so generally familiar as they are today. But our so-called English Bible struck root at once. The new version of the Bible was done into the terse and spirited vernacular of the people. Shakespeare's language was far more literary and he used a great many foreign words.

This was Shakespeare's great heritage, and this same heritage is yours, if you will but profit by the inexhaustible treasures of the encyclopedia or dictionary, or any good book of learning.

Do you know the rest of this

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strange story? Or about England, of whom Shakespeare wrote? In the then entire known world, there were not as many people who could speak a language comprehensible to people outside of each individual locality or neighborhood, as there are now in one single state in our Union—and that the number of those who could read Shakespeare's plays when they were printed, was probably not a tithe of these—not as many as there are now in the single city of Seattle or Los Angeles.

England was then very far from being a great world power, and did not become one until the downfall of Spain.

The England of Shakespeare, of Queen Elizabeth, and of Mary of the

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Scots, of Bacon and of Sir Walter Raleigh did not contain much more than two and a half million persons. They were just a simple farming and seafaring folk, rude and boisterous in their way, quarrelsome with their neighbors, dogged and dreaded fighters—and England was regarded by the cultured nations of Europe, like France and Spain, as a land of barbarians.

It was nearly a century and a half before Shakespeare's works and the treasures of his literature began to be known to the other peoples of Europe —and not really until the 19th century, that Shakespeare became in the same sense as Homer and Virgil and Dante, a world poet.

Now here is the amazing thing—

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that while Shakespeare was becoming known, in translations, to almost every nation and speech on earth, which possesses books—his works becoming recognized as among the world's masterpieces—his new language was spreading over the earth with a rapidity that has no parallel in history, and becoming in a true senses the first world language.

When Shakespeare was born the English nation did not possess a foot of territory outside of its own little isle. Even Scotland and Ireland were foreign lands, whose people spoke alien tongues.

When Shakespeare died England's spectacular career of colonization and conquest had hardly begun. Even then a few stray settlements in Vir-

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ginia were practically all it had. The Pilgrims had not yet come to Massachusetts Colony, and there was not a single military post in Australia, in Africa or in India.

The larger part of the New World was then claimed by the Spanish and the Portuguese. Their chief rival was France. The English trailed along behind, with the Hollanders.

The London of Shakespeare and Dryden had no street lights, nearly no paving or sewers. There were dreadful odors, plagues were frequent, smallpox was very common, and the average term of life was less than half what it is today. There were no schools, no newspapers, no postoffices, no banks, not even any stage lines running from London to other parts

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of England. Very few could read or write, and English speech itself was split among three dialects, the Southern, the Midland and the Northern. Those who spoke one dialect or gibberish could scarcely understand the others, and yet this was English, not the language we use.

Shakespeare drew on all the wealth of French and Latin as well. It was this which made his vocabulary the wonder of all succeeding ages. No poet ever lived who drew upon such a varied store of words as did the Bard of Avon. But this was largely due to the fact that our language is unlike any of the chief languages of the earth. It is not a "pure" tongue any more than we are a distinct race. Just as the people of the

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American Continent represent a fusion of the original Celts or Britons, with the Angles and Saxons and Danes, who came later, so the language itself is a strange composite. It represents a union of the two great streams of language which have divided the world between them. One of these is the Latin or Romance tongues —the French, the Spanish and the like. It was this union which has made the American language incomparably the richest of all languages, and is destined to become the universal speech of the world.

The spread of the American language, in fact, may be said to be breaking down the barriers of national prejudice and national isolation; it is becoming more and more the lan-

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guage of diplomacy, in this respect, superseding French; and it is also the language in which men of science of all lands commune with one another, now more than ever before—the language of scholarship and the interchange of ideas.

In India there are several million Hindus who use American improved English, for in that country the Englishman makes an effort to teach his own way of speaking, which is not altogether the same language that we speak with fluency. The most influential of the Indian newspapers, as well as some of the periodicals edited by Indians, are published in the Amercian language.

In Japan, American is a required study in the middle (or high) schools;

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it is the language of international commerce, just as it is the language of official life. The same thing is going on in China, and in another generation the Chinese will have added millions more to the number of those who speak the language of civilized intercourse, although the Chinese language in its sing song manner is the most explanatory language on earth, for in that language it is not altogether what you say that means a certain thing, but the way you sing it. In like manner, Swedish people are accused of singing their conversation.

Is it visionary to believe that before another century the other European languages will sink almost to the position of local dialects, while American, the native or adopted language

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of untold millions, will be known, if not spoken, by all the educated of every race?

As if conscious of its great future and its lofty mission as the vehicle of the world's progress, conscious that it must be all things intellectual to all men, it has expanded in every direction, rendering itself more copious, more flexible, more responsive in every way to the innumerable and extraordinarily varied demands of modern life, and yet why will you give this language the name of English when the Britishers could only claim twenty-five per cent of it from the Americans, and even unto this day hundreds of words that we Americans use are not used in England. Let us claim what rightfully belongs to us.

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Like a mighty river tapping a thousand springs and tributaries in its majestic sweep to the sea, thousands of miles from its headwaters, the American language has been added to and enriched from every side during a period of unparalleled progress since Shakespeare's day.

American science has invented an enormous number of technical words, many of which have passed into common use; research and scholarship have added their quota; the archaeologist delving in the ruins of buried cities or studying the mysterious life of ancient civilizations, has made his contribution; the extraordinary development of industry has originated thousands of words which Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson could not de-

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fine if they were to return to earth; trade and commerce have added to our vocabulary, and in so doing have drawn upon every quarter of the civilized world.

Not only has the language increased wonderfully in number of words, but the meanings attached to old words have in numberless cases greatly changed and multiplied. Within a comparatively few years our knowledge in all departments of science and history has greatly advanced and in many it has been revolutionized, and all these transformations have been reflected in the language.

An encyclopedia, dictionary, or a dozen other such books of learning are usually avoided by the average scholar as not being particularly essential to

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their studies, while at the same time they are the most essential books of learning, for in them you can find out all that you are being reminded of in this pamphlet, and thousands of things that the writer never thought of, and that are gradually being forgotten by the average world for the want of thought, study and concentration; of the dead English language or Anglo-Saxon of the past; to the whole mystery of our exquisitely flexible American language—that language which is a harp when it plays, a drum when it fights, a sob when it mourns, a child's voice when it laughs; in anger, thunder; in love, tenderness; the language of the eighteenth Psalm, and Nelson's Signal; Shakespeare's and Shelley's tongue, now the cow-

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boy's too. The language that made its way to new lands in war cries, and remained because it spoke peace to suffering humanity, because every year has added to it new words that describe new arts and trades, inventions and discoveries, and yet it was never spoken until after America was discovered.

Surely no treasury of words can be too copious or too elaborate when it has to deal with such a language, and with all the new forms it takes in the new lands to which it is carried. A list of the new American words of the last century and particularly of the last five years, is history in itself, a tale of progress and nation building; of increasing knowledge and of in-

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creasing kindliness; of a broader pity for the suffering, sterner impatience of injustice.

"Use is the law of language." This is the opinion quoted by instructors. It was also accepted by China and India some two thousand years ago, which brought about colloquialism, and wherever this exists the country is under submission to some other country; therefore, use should not be the law of language. In order to unite a nation in one solid body, it is absolutely necessary that the entire nation should speak one tongue with one meaning, and be taught the danger of conquest and how to protect their country by uniting themselves under one flag and one language.

To look at a word intensely, is to

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study its pedigree and its social status, and its origin, as it were, in the big family of American words, and to explain precisely what is its function today as an instrument of human expression.

The mastery of American, or the world's language, consists in knowing this ancestral history of words and in the ability to utilize this knowledge in choosing the best words from among a motley herd of vulgar ones. A word has originally but one meaning. All other uses, however widely they may diverge from one another and recede from this one, may yet be affiliated to it, brought back to the one central meaning, which grasps and knits them all together; just as the several races of men, black, white,

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yellow and red, despite all their present diversity and dispersion, have a central point of unity in that one pair from whom they all have descended; thousands of years of climate has changed their colors, ways, language and general appearance.

Words are not merely symbols of ideas; they are the very warp and woof of the mind. It has been questioned by psychologists whether one can think at all except in verbal terms. Certain it is that the capacity to use words is the great fundamental distinction between man and all animals. And equally certain is it that the capacity to use words in their nicer senses, with full comprehension of their meanings, is one great fundamental distinction between a cultured and an uncultured man and, right here let us

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speak of the possibilities of development of which man is capable. For instance: It is not necessary to spell a word in order to pronounce it. As we understand it we picture the word. In the same manner would it not be just as easy by careful study, to picture your change when purchasing an article instead of counting your change, or picture a column of figures instead of adding them up? We say there are natural mathematicians, couldn't it be possible that you are natural as they, providing you would develop your natural ability? Some call it psychology, but in reality this is study and development of the mind, for after all our mind has much more capacity than we give it credit for, and in a thousand years from now the race

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may look back on our store of knowledge at the present with shame.

Fortunately, however, the man who lacks the culture that such a knowledge of study implies can remedy the defects in his education and attain self-culture if he will but follow advice given to learn, to look, to think, to be sure of what you see. Don't make up your mind to what you see until your eyes have carried to your brain the truth of what you see—that is to say, don't let your brain contradict your eyes, nor act faster than your sight.

In this way many travel on through life with opinion controlling their thoughts, without investigation, and if it were not for that, we could not claim that we speak English, but we have been told so by our mothers, our

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grandmothers and our teachers, and we take for granted that what they say is a fact, so why not use tradition instead of books?

When Great Britain will discard the Johnson dictionary and Chaucer, the father of the English language, from their schools and adopt in its place the Noah Webster's dictionary, compiled by Americans, it goes a long way towards proving that the American version of the language which we speak is fast being accepted as a universal language. Not only that, but on the fly-leaf of Noah Webster's original dictionary he confesses with apology that not more than twenty-five per cent of the words contained therein owe their origin to the English tongue. This fly-leaf has been

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extracted from the later edition since his death, in the same manner that portions of the History of Josephus, the Holy Bible and the Koran have been extracted, for a purpose perhaps unknown to us.

In conclusion I will say, please do not take for granted anything until you know it to be a fact; investigate it from some printed source of authority. I do not lay claim to all of this article. This knowledge is gained by research of books of authority, on these subjects, various dictionaries and foreign histories, and this article is compiled for the sole purpose of showing that we do not speak English. Our language and our flag and our people are our own and we should so name them.

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NOT THE END, BUT I'VE DONE MY BIT FOR THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

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TABOO

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HURRAH FOR AMERICA
HER FLAG
HER PEOPLE
AND
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